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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 004181

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS;
NSC FOR HOLLY MORROW

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: "UNCLE SAM, I'M BEING BULLIED!"

REF: A. THAKSIN'S JUNE 23 LETTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH

[1](#)B. PRESIDENT BUSH'S JULY 3 RESPONSE LETTER TO THAKSIN
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 3916

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Alex A. Arvizu, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Over the past few days, the Thai media has widely reported on and printed copies of the exchange of letters between caretaker PM Thaksin Shinawatra and President Bush (ref letters). While the President's letter to Thaksin is regarded as uncontroversial and indeed has been praised by some of our contacts, criticism of the PM ranges from a mild "cry baby" label to accusations that he has "sold out national sovereignty." Separately, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) announced that they are canceling the mass demonstration scheduled for Friday at Sanam Luang, instead opting to march to six different embassies (including the US) to present open letters to foreign leaders "explaining the current political situation in Thailand." End summary.

LETTER OF SHAME

[1](#)2. (C) News of the controversial exchange of letters between caretaker PM Thaksin and President Bush was first disclosed by caretaker senator Kraisaak Chunhavan on July 7. Kraisaak accused Thaksin of repeating attacks on "charismatic" figures close to the King in his letter. On July 12, the letters were published by the Matichon newspaper (the result, apparently, of a leak from the MFA), and was quickly picked up by all Thai media outlets. President Bush's letter has been generally well-received, and in fact has been praised by some Embassy contacts. The line "the Thai people are resilient and the Thai democracy is strong" was covered in most newspapers. Surin Pitsuwan, a leader from the opposition Democrat Party told poloff the President's letter was "a proper response to Thaksin's." However, the Thai media has lashed out against Thaksin, calling his letters to President Bush (and other world and Asian leaders) "shameful" and "embarrassing to himself and the nation". A former Thai ambassador (presumably Kasit Piromyo) reportedly commented that Thaksin has "compromised the Kingdom's sovereignty" when he "took domestic issues into the international arena". Thai web blogs are also calling him a "cry baby" and a hypocrite for his prior "condemnation of American influence in other nations' domestic affairs". A comic in Thai newspaper "Krungthep Thurakit" (Bangkok Business) yesterday portrayed Thaksin sitting like a dog with a letter in his mouth while

President Bush pets him on the head, saying "Oh my...good boy..."

WE HAVE LETTERS, TOO!

13. (C) Reportedly taking the King's health into consideration (Note: The King fell while walking on Palace grounds on June 24. End note.), the PAD announced that they are canceling their planned demonstration on July 14, where they hoped to draw tens of thousands of supporters to march on Government House. Instead, the PAD will march to six different embassies - China, Russia, France, Japan, Great Britain, and the United States - to present open letters to explain "the real political situation in Thailand." Sondhi promised that demonstrations at Sanam Luang will resume after the King's health improves.

COMMENTS - A CLOSE CALL

14. (C) The decision by Government House/MFA to release the texts of Thaksin's letters to the President, and the President's response, was probably a mistake. The letters were leaked to the press ostensibly to refute the accusation that Thaksin had referred to "a charismatic figure" in his communication to the White House. There was no such reference, of course, but the petulant tone of Thaksin's letters strike many Thais as undignified, and have provided more ammunition to his opponents. The postponement of the PAD's demonstrations may put off political pressure a while longer for the embattled caretaker PM, but it's only a matter

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of time before they try again. End comment.
ARVIZU